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ABSTRACT

This guide provides employers with information to help begin or expand a commitment to the School-to-Career initiative (STC). (Companion guides for associations, labor unions and engagement specialists are available separately.) It begins by describing these three easy steps to getting started: plan your strategy, choose your activities, and get connected. The following sections discuss preparing today's students and tomorrow's workforce; STC as an educational strategy; employer benefits; making a participation plan; focusing your strategies, including examples of activities to build on what exists, solve a business need, and invest in your community; areas where employers focus their efforts through STC to go from strategy to participation; and examples of specific STC activities that have proven to impact student performance and growth, while delivering excellent results for participating employers. A section of additional resources provides websites to help answer questions and gain access to proven tools and strategies. (YLB)

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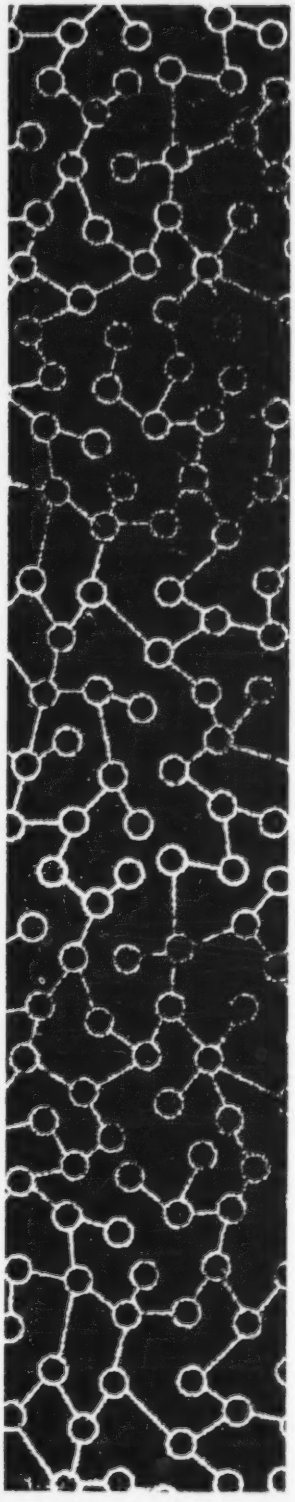
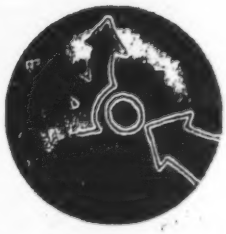
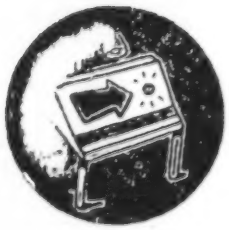


Get Connected to School-to-Career

A QUICK GUIDE for Employers



Preparing Today's Students and Tomorrow's Workforce



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Getting Started—Three Easy Steps

School-to-Career makes sense for students and your business. Below are three easy steps to begin your participation in this exciting initiative.

STEP 1 — Plan Your Strategy

Build on What Exists inside your business and in the community to gain maximum impact without re-inventing the wheel.

Solve a Business Need by completing short-term projects, increasing employee morale and meeting marketing and recruitment goals.

Invest in Your Community in an easy, coordinated way that significantly impacts local schools and allows you to demonstrate a leadership role in the communities where you conduct business.

STEP 2 — Choose Your Activities

Employers participate in School-to-Career by working directly with students and teachers, helping to build the local School-to-Career system and by aligning their business practices with this important initiative. Here are some of the many ways you can participate in School-to-Career:

With Students

- Provide work-based learning opportunities such as internships, job shadows and career mentoring.
- Be a guest speaker in local classrooms and host students for workplace tours.

With Teachers

- Provide industry expertise in designing curriculum and projects.
- Offer teacher internships and job shadows to help them learn about your business and industry.

With Other School-to-Career Leaders

- Participate on advisory boards of local School-to-Career partnerships and school programs.
- Use your expertise and resources to promote School-to-Career and increase participation.
- Take a proactive role in promoting supportive public policy for School-to-Career.

STEP 3 — Get Connected

Now that you understand the benefits of School-to-Career and how to participate, it is time to Get Connected. Here is a checklist of your next steps:

- ✓ Call your local School-to-Career partnership and schedule a meeting. To contact your local partnership, call (800) 962-8821 or visit www.stcconnect.com.
- ✓ Contact your local chamber of commerce or industry association to join other businesses that are making strategic investments in School-to-Career.
- ✓ Go deeper and make smart decisions about participation by completing a *Next Steps Worksheet*, accessing additional tools and strategies and reading success stories, all found at www.nww.org and www.stc-clearinghouse.org.

Preparing Today's Students and Tomorrow's Workforce

Employers in California increasingly look towards strategic partnerships with education to improve student performance and increase the pool of skilled and motivated future employees. One solution is School-to-Career. Currently there are 47 local School-to-Career partnerships across the state that are ready to help you impact today's students and your bottom line.

This *Quick Guide* for Employers will help you begin or expand your commitment to School-to-Career. By using this guide and the easy-to-use tools and strategies found at www.nww.org and www.stc-clearinghouse.org, you can become one of the thousands of California employers that have turned a commitment to education into a strategic advantage.

Bank of America supports educational development and reform efforts — community by community, student by student — that have broad application and contribute to the long-term strength of communities where we serve customers.

BANK OF AMERICA'S COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION PRINCIPLES

School-to-Career – Making Real Connections

School-to-Career is education that makes learning more relevant and helps students build the skills to be successful in the 21st century. Career academies and real-life projects linked to the curriculum provide for innovation in the schools. Work-based learning such as internships, job shadowing and career mentoring provides the connections that bring learning to a new level. The results are more motivated, high-performing students who have the skills to succeed in college, careers and life.

Employer Benefits

Thousands of California employers have achieved significant results by embracing School-to-Career as an integral component of their workforce development strategies. Large employers, small businesses and labor organizations of all kinds are taking a leadership role by investing time, resources and expertise into School-to-Career systems – with powerful results.

Employers benefit from participation through:

- Reduced training and recruitment costs.
- Productivity by students in the workplace.
- Increased employee morale and leadership skills.
- Building vibrant schools and communities.
- Positive exposure.

A Closer Look – Making a Participation Plan

The goal of School-to-Career is to help teachers and students succeed, while preparing a future workforce that will continue our prosperity in California. This may sound like a tall task, but getting started can be quick and easy. Your involvement can grow as you achieve positive results and build employee commitment. It all starts with a good plan.

Many businesses across the state have discovered effective practices for designing and implementing School-to-Career activities.

Here are a few critical success factors to consider as you begin:

- Start small and build on success.
- Connect to a local School-to-Career partnership (or intermediary organization) to support your efforts and serve as the liaison between your organization and the schools.
- Align your School-to-Career activities with your business plan and mission.
- Leverage existing resources internally and in the community to maximize your involvement.
- Build in continuous improvement processes for your business and participating students.
- Have high expectations for students; they will usually exceed them!

As your participation grows, consider the following success factors:

- Designate an internal coordinator to work with your community and school partners.
- Create an identity for your program so that your employees own it and stay committed.
- Design your individual activities as part of a longer-term plan.
- Engage your company's leadership to serve as School-to-Career champions.

Critical Success Factor

Align your School-to-Career activities with your business plan to ensure return on investment and long-term commitment from your business.

You do not need to begin with large investments of time and money, just smart investments that work. Many small businesses begin with a few job shadows or one or two summer interns. As you and your employees realize the benefits, you can develop a plan to grow your activities and link School-to-Career to your bottom-line.

Many larger businesses directly connect School-to-Career to their human resource and workforce development goals, and align expenditures in Community Relations, Human Resources, Marketing and Corporate Giving to maximize their return from this initiative. Small businesses have equal success by making realistic time and resource commitments to proven activities that impact students and teachers and contribute to the growth of their business and customer base.

School-to-Career Facts:

- *According to research from the National School-to-Work Office, one in four U.S. businesses with 25 or more employees participate in a School-to-Career partnership.*
- *A recent report from the National Conference of State Legislatures shows that students who participate in School-to-Career are more motivated in school, more likely to attend college or advanced training and less likely to drop out.*
- *A study by the National Employer Leadership Council shows companies average a 2-1 return on investment from participation in School-to-Career.*

Quick Planning Check List

- ✓ Do your homework and identify a priority for your business.
- ✓ Create a specific plan for participation.
- ✓ Start with a manageable, measurable pilot activity (e.g., Groundhog Job Shadow Day).
- ✓ Review success and improvement areas then expand the activity.
- ✓ Connect the activity to your core business plan and move to the next priority.

Focus Your Strategies

To be successful, it is important to target your involvement. Having clear and targeted strategies for School-to-Career that leverage your resources will ensure your success.

Business representatives often become involved in School-to-Career because it is the "right thing to do." It is equally important to design your participation to contribute to your bottom-line. Benefits come in many forms, from employee satisfaction to real returns from productivity and reduced recruitment and training costs. Companies that plan and execute School-to-Career well gain short and long-term benefits while having a real impact on improving education.

Below are some proven strategies that employers have used to focus their efforts. Simply choose strategies that make the most sense for your business.

Build on What Exists

- Survey what your business is already doing with education and build on it.
- Re-energize or expand existing employee volunteer programs.
- Align School-to-Career with your corporate philanthropy investments.
- Look to local chambers of commerce or industry associations for existing activities.
- Participate in proven, easy-to-implement campaigns such as Groundhog Job Shadow Day and California Intern Summer.
- Get involved with community organizations or local partnerships already connecting students to School-to-Career opportunities.
- Consider working with schools where your employees send their children.

Solve a Business Need

- Complete needed projects by bringing in motivated, skilled student interns.
- Build your student workplace opportunities as part of a career path within your company – increasing the likelihood of retaining these loyal future employees.
- Build employee supervisory skills and morale through working with youth.
- Focus on high turnover areas and design opportunities for youth to fill them.
- Connect School-to-Career to your recruitment and/or marketing objectives.
- Use School-to-Career to generate positive publicity for your business.
- Take ownership of local issues through powerful partnerships that work.

Invest in Your Community

- Sponsor an education project that also meets a community need.
- Adopt a school committed to School-to-Career.
- Focus on schools that need the most help – developing future leaders and vibrant local economies.
- Add your business knowledge and technology to schools and curriculum – making learning current and relevant.
- Advocate for more resources to local schools and School-to-Career partnerships.

From Strategy to Participation

Your organization has a range of options for participation in School-to-Career. Which ones you choose will depend on several factors. What are the priorities for your employees and leadership? Which activities can work in your current business environment? Which ones can you execute and grow successfully over time?

Many companies start small and build on their success; others have larger, immediate needs and launch aggressive initiatives as a strategic business venture. A winning mix matches your business needs with the needs of local schools, focusing on where you as an employer add unique value.

There are four main areas where employers focus their efforts through School-to-Career:

Working directly with students

Employers have their employees mentor students and speak in local classrooms, exposing young people to careers and making them aware of a range of career options. Employers go deeper by offering work-based learning experiences such as job shadowing and internships that help students make career decisions and build necessary skills.

Working directly with teachers

Employers support teachers by participating in classroom exercises, business simulations, and industry-driven projects. In the workplace, companies offer meaningful training and internships for teachers that can inspire innovative, relevant curriculum.

Building a School-to-Career system

Employers enhance the relevancy of curriculum and strengthen innovative school reform, supply state-of-the-art information and resources to schools, and provide leadership through participation on advisory boards.

PROFILE –
Small Business Tip

Businesses in San Bernardino County work with a large number of students without taxing their resources through a program called Business Solutions. Businesses identify real challenges facing their operations and ask elementary, middle or high school classes to present innovative new approaches to address the challenge. Students use their academic knowledge and skills to research, analyze and propose possible solutions to the problem and deliver valuable ideas to businesses.

Strengthening employer practices

Employers align their policy decisions, hiring practices, government relations and resource allocations with School-to-Career activities and principles. Keys here involve making hiring decisions that support School-to-Career; taking leadership in promoting School-to-Career within your industry; and actively engaging in local and regional efforts to design a quality workforce development system.

Activities that Work

The following examples of specific School-to-Career activities have proven to impact student performance and growth, while delivering excellent results for participating employers:

- ***Job Shadowing:*** Provide structured experiences where students or teachers observe a "day-in-the-life" of employees for either a few hours or a full day, to learn about a particular job or industry.

- ***Internships/Apprenticeships:*** Provide paid experiences where students or teachers work for a specified time period learning about your business and industry by sampling a variety of tasks. Teacher internships are also an excellent way to have a highly productive person at your company, who then translates the experience back to the classroom and their students.

We started with a volunteer drive that would put a business partner in every high school classroom. One hundred and thirty five volunteers later, we are well on our way. Our next step will be to design a job shadow and internship component tied to student performance.

KEN OPLINGER
PRESIDENT/CEO, VISALIA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

- ***Workplace Tours and Guest Speaking:*** Host a visit to your work site where students or educators can talk to employees and observe operations, taking valuable lessons back to the classroom. Or, send employees to a school to speak with students about your business, industry and/or career field.

- ***Career Mentoring:*** Help students reach their full potential by providing advice, teaching them new skills and challenging them to perform well in and out of school. Employees can also provide students with positive, professional role models electronically through telementoring.

- ***Advisory Boards:*** Industry leaders add unique value by participating on advisory boards for local partnerships and/or career pathways at local schools. Advisory boards facilitate needed dialogue among educators, employers and the community.

PROFILE – *Solving a Business Need*

In order to meet a critical need for future information technology workers, Agilent hired 21 high school interns during the summer. The company hired a program coordinator to coordinate the interns and run weekly workshops on work readiness skills and connections to classroom curriculum.

Critical Success Factor

Connect to a local School-to-Career partnership (or intermediary organization) to help with program design and implementation. These organizations make it easy to connect to local schools, provide training and technical support, and streamline your activities to ensure success.

- ***Curriculum Teams:*** Provide expertise and input to schools to develop and strengthen curriculum that reflects current business needs, trends and technology.
- ***Leadership Through Marketing:*** Become a leader in growing participation in School-to-Career through targeted marketing campaigns. This includes leveraging your own marketing resources or participating in regional campaigns with electronic and print media partners.
- ***Policy Advocacy:*** Use your company's influence to gain positive public policy to support successful School-to-Career systems.

Many successful employer partners include several of these activities to make up their School-to-Career initiative. Your organization may already have some form of these activities in place. The key is to improve and expand your existing and new programs and align them with your School-to-Career plan. In every community there are effective intermediary organizations that make the connections between employers and schools. They can facilitate your involvement and make it easy for you to implement and grow your commitment.

PROFILE – *Meeting a Community Need*

Ventura County's Building and Trades Council works with School-to-Career and local high schools to have students build houses for Habitat for Humanity. The initiative leverages industry experts with community and government funds to provide students with learning rich experiences about construction careers and needy families with a home of their own.

Additional Resources

Now that you have a good idea of where to start and how to plan your involvement in School-to-Career, there are a number of resources that can be your guide as you move forward.

First, your local School-to-Career partnership can be your best ally in developing and implementing a successful School-to-Career initiative. Also check with your local chamber of commerce, industry organization or civic group. They are probably already participating in School-to-Career and can be an easy place to start. Beyond that, there are a number of additional resources that can help you answer questions and gain access to many more proven tools and strategies.

www.nww.org

The website for New Ways to Work that serves as a portal for additional employer and labor participation information, such as:

- A *Next Steps Worksheet* for employers to take further action.
- Proven strategies and effective practices from throughout the state and country.
- A guide for creating safe and legal work-based learning experiences, focusing on can-do approaches to relevant laws and regulations.
- Specific tips for small businesses and industry specific examples.
- Links to materials and worksheets on specific strategies and activities.
- Links to additional resources and School-to-Career organizations.

www.stc-clearinghouse.com

A one-stop website with helpful tools and materials for School-to-Career and other education improvement initiatives. At the School-to-Career Clearinghouse you can search for best-practice tools and materials from across the state. This site also houses this *Employer Quick Guide* and many other helpful tools, all available for downloading in PDF format.

www.worksite21.org

An employer-focused site, developed by the Oregon Business Council, with interactive tools for participation in School-to-Career called "The Bigger Picture."

www.stcconnect.com

An easy way to get connected to statewide campaigns such as National Groundhog Job Shadow Day and California Intern Summer.

www.nelc.org

Website for the National Employer Leadership Council (NELC) which provides numerous tools and reports on successful employer participation in School-to-Career. In particular, download the *Employer Participation Model and the Intuitions Confirmed* report about employer return on investment through School-to-Career. NELC also runs numerous initiatives in high growth industries in which you can become involved.

PROFILE – *Supporting Local Partnerships*

IBM in Sacramento utilizes LEED Sacramento, the local School-to-Career partnership, as their support for successful school and workplace activities for students and teachers. To ensure the sustainability of LEED, IBM houses the partnership in their offices and provides valuable resources to grow their operations.

"We started working with our local schools through a business program called Virtual Enterprise. We have provided advisors, sponsored summer interns, and hosted a Teachers Business Literacy Program. We remain focused on the original goal of starting a 'Financial Services Academy' where high school students can discover the full range of insurance and financial careers."

VIC RYBERG, LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT SUPERINTENDENT
STATE FARM INSURANCE, BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA

PROFILE – *Marketing and Advocacy*

Businesses in Southern California, in partnership with KCBS Channel 2 and several radio stations, invest significant resources to promote School-to-Career through mass media. This marketing support has resulted in reaching millions of students, parents, employers and community members with positive messages about School-to-Career and its partner companies. Similar partnerships have now been developed across the state.

"Don't let your own prejudices reduce your expectations for working with students. For example, we pay more than normal for our student interns and, in turn, we expect and receive more from them. Have high expectations for School-to-Career — the results will likely exceed them."

TERRY KUNYSZ
PRESIDENT, CASADY AND GREENE, INC.

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